



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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National Seashore

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Point Reyes National Seashore News Release

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For Immediate Release
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Rare Yellow-billed Cuckoo Bird Sighting at Point Reyes National Seashore

A Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) was found in the park on August 11 near Kehoe Ranch on Pierce Point Road. Yellow-billed Cuckoos are state listed as endangered and are rare to Marin County. Although not new to Point Reyes National Seashore, Peter Pyle, an ornithologist for the Institute for Bird Populations, stated they have been seen only around 5 times before, and this is the first time one has been seen in the summer/fall. The bird was mature and had a brood patch indicating that it had bred, or attempted to, this year. The species usually breeds in California's Central Valley and in regions of southern California beginning in June and extending into early August. They usually migrate to South America to wintering areas in late August.

Dr. Sarah Allen, Science Advisor at the National Seashore stated, "The sheer number of bird species seen along the Point Reyes Peninsula reconfirm its importance to the ecosystem. This truly is one of America's national treasures, providing habitat and food for resident as well as migratory birds."

As wildland habitat is lost elsewhere in California, the relevance of the Point Reyes Peninsula as a protected area with a notably rich biological diversity increases. Nearly 45% of North American avian species (over 480 species) have been seen at Point Reyes due to the variety of habitat. Twenty-seven threatened and endangered species exist within the Seashore. The American Bird Conservancy named Point Reyes as one of the 100 Globally Important Bird Areas and Population Action International describes this portion of the central California as one of the 25 most biologically rich but threatened areas in the world.


The preferred habitat for the Yellow-billed Cuckoo is typically dense woods and riparian areas with willows and alders. Their primary food includes grasshoppers, caterpillars and other large insects. They also occasionally prey on fruit, frogs and lizards.

The species is grayish-brown above and with white belly. The primaries are rufous and the distinctive, longish tail has undertail feathers of black with white. The bill is longer, curved and with a yellow, lower mandible. Male and female plumage is the same and both sexes may have brood patches.

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The Yellow-billed Cuckoo has declined precipitously throughout its range in southern Canada, the United States, and northern Mexico. It is nearly extinct west of the Continental Divide, having disappeared from British Columbia in the 1920's, from Washington in the 1930's, from Oregon in the 1940's, and from northern California in the 1950's. It is extremely rare in the interior West.

For more information check out the following web sites:

<http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/swcbd/species/cuckoo/cuckoo1.html>

<http://birds.cornell.edu/bfl/speciesaccts/yebcuc.html>

Please visit our expanded website at www.nps.gov/pore.

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